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Common Pig Troubles

By

HOWARD DAVIDSON

Formerly Extension Animal Husbandman, The Ohio State University

GENERAL CONTROL MEASURES

Since hogs contaminated with parasites are likely to pick up specific diseases, a program of parasite control should be adopted on every farm. The McLean County System of Swine Sanitation will work. This includes—

1. Thoroughly clean all farrowing quarters with boiling lye water. The lye helps loosen the dirt and the hot water kills worm eggs.
2. Wash the sow with soap and warm water just before farrowing. Be sure that the udder is clean, so that the little pigs do not get a mouthful of eggs.
3. Either farrow in individual houses on clean rotation pasture, or farrow in a central house and move the sows and pigs to clean pasture as soon as possible. Haul the sows and pigs so that they do not walk through contaminated lanes or lots on the way to pasture.
4. Keep pigs on clean pasture until they weigh at least from 80 to 100 pounds.
5. Keep plenty of good feed and clean water before the pigs at all times, so that they are gaining rapidly.

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Specific Diseases and Minor Ills

There are many things that will cause pigs to be sick and unthrifty. At times the trouble shows up in "poor doing" pigs and sometimes it becomes severe enough to cause heavy death loss.

Some ailments are rather rare and only occasionally cause trouble, while others give the hog producer almost constant trouble. This bulletin deals with only the more common parasites and diseases, and the controls that have been effective. For a complete discussion of all livestock diseases see the 1942 Yearbook of Agriculture entitled, Keeping Livestock Healthy.

Baby Pig Disease

To date, no one has found the specific cause of baby pig disease. It has been found that pigs afflicted with baby pig disease have a very low blood sugar content, but investigators have not been able to find the reason. The disease is not as common as some other pig troubles, but is discussed first because it occurs so early in the pig's life.

The litters afflicted usually die within 36 to 48 hours after birth, and nearly always the entire litter is lost within a few hours. Occasionally some pigs will linger for a few days, but it is rather rare for any to recover.

The pigs seem to be normal when they are born and the first symptoms are as follows: One or two pigs will leave their nest and wander around. Very often they are found in a corner of the pen trying to get out, or they burrow under the bedding. In a couple of hours they start to squeal and it is one of those weak whines that reminds one of a "fussy" baby. At about this time others in the litter will start to wander and in a short while they die.

The pigs will try to nurse, but if you watch closely you will notice that they seldom get the teat in their mouth, or, if they do, they do not have enough strength to suck the milk.

Control: Since the blood sugar content is low in all pigs afflicted with baby pig disease the only control to date is to give the pigs sugar in some form. An injection of 5cc or 10cc of liquid dextrose or glucose, given with a hypodermic needle in the flank or abdominal cavity, has been very effective if given at the time of the first symptoms. Later on, a paralysis sets in and the injection of sugar has been only partially effective.

If you do not have a hypodermic needle give each pig in the litter a tablespoon of corn syrup every 2 hours until they begin to act normal. This latter treatment has given good results in some cases but is not as dependable as the injection. Call your veterinarian at once, so that he

can advise you on later litters, but speed is very essential in the treatment of the disease, and the home remedies may save pigs that would be too far gone if there was a delay in getting the veterinarian.

Some herdsmen have used the precaution of injecting the liquid sugar into each pig soon after birth, and report no cases of baby pig disease even though they had severe death losses in previous years.

Pig Scours

There are many things that will cause scours in baby pigs. In very young pigs, the most common causes are:

1. Over-feeding the sow, which may cause her to give too much milk, or milk that produces a digestive disturbance.
2. Pigs that have become chilled or subjected to a sudden change in temperature.
3. Damp bedding.
4. Specific infections.

Control: Since there is such a variety of things that can cause scours, it may be necessary to try several remedies before the trouble is brought under control. The first thing is to reduce the sow's feed and include more bulky feeds such as bran or oats. Some herdsmen report prompt results by giving the sow 2 to 4 ounces of baking soda, castor oil, raw linseed oil, epsom salts, or glauber salts in each feed until the trouble clears up. A teaspoonful of baking soda, lime water, or castor oil can be given to each pig.

Clean the farrowing pen thoroughly and see that the pigs are dry and warm and free from drafts. If the scours persist, call a veterinarian, because the pig may have one of the infectious varieties.

Scours in older pigs are more often caused by cold, damp weather, frosted legumes, or specific infections. The controls are the same as given for young pigs.

Anemia

This disease is caused chiefly by a lack of iron in the diet. It is generally associated with suckling pigs, but has been found in older hogs that have been confined. All milk, including sows' milk, is deficient in iron, and when little pigs are confined on wood or concrete floors the disease usually shows up in a week or 10 days.

The first symptom is paleness of the skin, especially the ears. This can be noted in white or red pigs, but cannot be noticed on hogs with black pigment. As anemia advances, the pig becomes listless, the hair becomes rough, the skin wrinkled, back arched with the legs drawn close together, the belly becomes distended, and breathing is quite

jerky. This is the stage often called "thumps," and a pig so affected seldom recovers. Pigs often squeal as if in intense pain just before they fall over dead.

Control: Since pigs that are farrowed out on pasture never have the disease, it is assumed that they get enough iron by rooting in the soil. The most common control is to place a shovelful of sod or dirt in the pen every day. Another common control is to paint a solution containing iron on the sow's udder once or twice a day. Such a solution can be made by dissolving ½ pound of copperas (ferrous sulfate) in

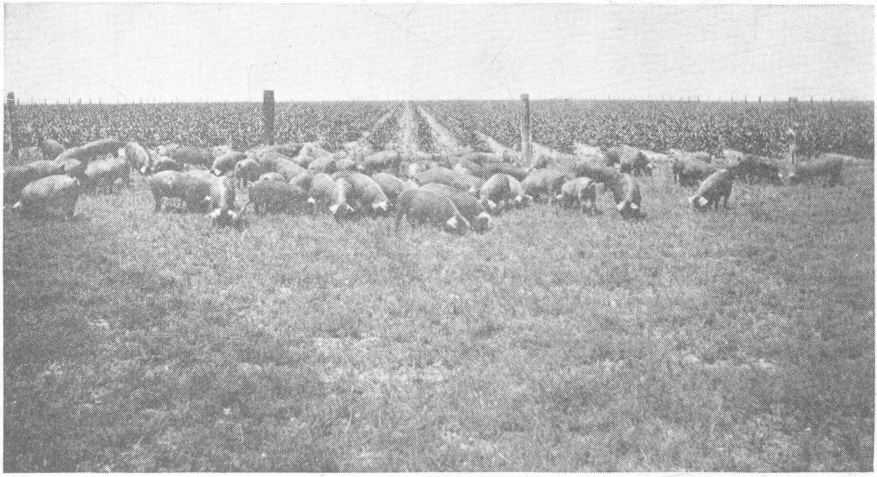

Fig. 1.—Clean rotation pasture makes it easier to raise thrifty pigs.

a quart of warm water. Some men have controlled the disease by placing a teaspoonful of dry copperas in the corner of the pen.

The most effective control is to move the sows and pigs on clean pasture just as soon as any symptoms occur.

Enteritis

There are several kinds of enteritis, and the term is applied to anything that causes an inflammation of the intestines and diarrhea. The most common type has been known as necrotic enteritis, or "necro," but there are other types with about the same symptoms and it is almost impossible to determine the exact nature of the trouble.

In the past, enteritis was associated with filth or lack of sanitation. While it is true that the disease is more often associated with poor sanitation, there have been many cases reported under good conditions. This is especially true in hogs that have just been vaccinated for hog cholera.

Symptoms.—In the early stages of the disease, the symptoms are nearly identical with cholera or erysipelas. The pigs will run a high temperature, show a loss of appetite, and have diarrhea. It is always well to call in a veterinarian. Faulty diagnosis, followed with a treatment for one of the other diseases, is usually fatal. There is quite a variance in the potency of the organism. Sometimes a high death loss occurs, while at other times the pigs seem to recover in a few days. However, it is very seldom that these pigs ever make "good doers," and they are usually an expensive bunch to feed out.

Control: One of the most effective home-made treatments is the salt-soda treatment. Dissolve 3 pounds salt and 2 pounds soda in 5 gallons of water. Soak whole oats in this solution for 10 to 12 hours and feed nothing but the soaked oats for 4 or 5 days. Many of the sick hogs will respond to the treatment, and they can be brought back on their regular ration in about 2 weeks; in the meantime they should be fed lightly on a slop of small grain such as oats, wheat, or barley.

Some hogs are too sick to eat, and they will not respond to this treatment. Others in the herd will eat but do not fully recover, unless they are given a repeat treatment in about 2 weeks.

Recent tests indicate that some of the sulfa drugs are quite effective on most types of enteritis. They should only be used under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.

Farms that have repeated outbreaks of enteritis should follow a definite system of control. Such a system may well contain the following points:

1. Keep hogs free of parasites, because they lower the resistance of the animals.
2. Full-feed market pigs on balanced rations; a well fed pig is more resistant.
3. Many outbreaks of enteritis occur in 10 to 12 days following hog cholera vaccination. It has been found that pigs vaccinated at 5 to 6 weeks of age are probably healthier than for some time later. They are on a good diet of sow's milk and grain, and will still be on a good diet when the effects of the vaccination really take place, which is in about 7 days. At any rate, the pigs are fully recovered before they are weaned.
4. If outbreaks of enteritis occur with each crop of pigs, even under sanitary conditions, it may be well to dispose of the sow herd and start with clean sows. They may be carriers of the disease.

Cholera

The disease and the control are generally known. When to vaccinate is a much more controversial question than how. The work at

the Ohio State University and the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station would indicate that vaccination should be done at least 10 days to 2 weeks before the pigs are weaned. There is no evidence that the immunity is not as permanent as when given later, although gilts in the University herd are re-vaccinated at the time their first litter is immuned. The advantages of early vaccination are:

1. The cost per pig is less.
2. Less labor is needed.
3. Pigs are more healthy and are not so likely to contract enteritis or other infectious diseases.
4. There is no danger of an outbreak of cholera in the herd from outside sources.

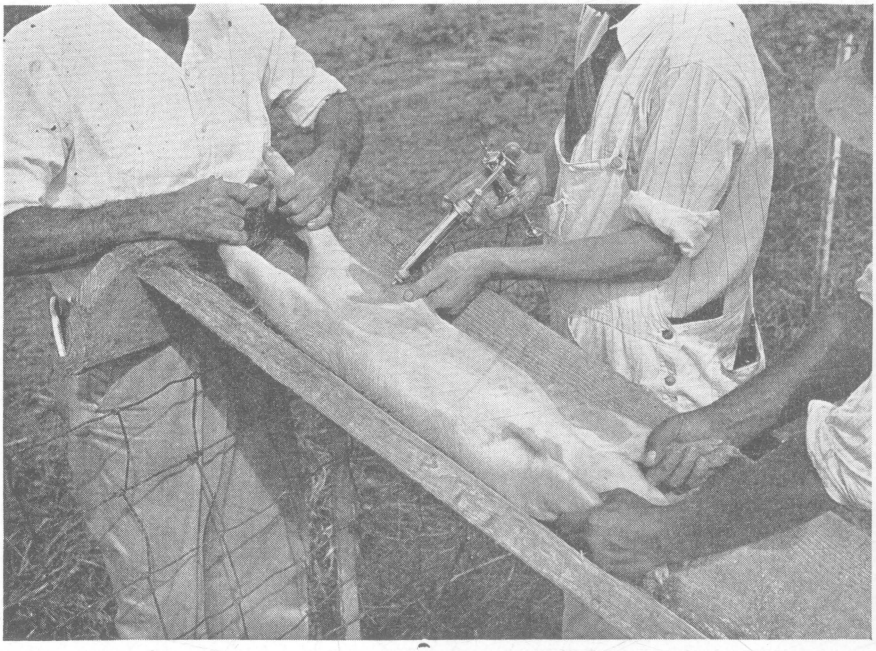

Fig. 2.—A feed trough makes a good "operating table" for use when vaccinating pigs.

So-called cholera breaks, following vaccination, usually occur only when pigs have had their resistance lowered through other causes. Roundworms are the chief source of trouble, and many veterinarians hesitate to vaccinate pigs that have been raised in worm-infested lots.

Erysipelas

This disease has been recognized for many years in Europe, but has only recently become of economic importance in the United States.

There are many things concerning the disease that are not understood —such as how it spreads from animal to animal; how long it will live in the soil; why it seems to remain in some soils and not in others, etc.

In the early stages, the symptoms are so nearly like those of hog cholera, and some cases of enteritis, that even a trained veterinarian has difficulty in making a correct diagnosis. Animals may run a temperature of from 107° to 110°. They lie in their bedding, usually on their chests, and when aroused will often stagger much like hogs with cholera. There are two points of difference usually noted between the symptoms of these two diseases—with erysipelas the pigs are more active when aroused, and often run rapidly for short distances. The other difference is noted in the eyes; with cholera the eyes are dull and watery and usually have a discharge, while with erysipelas the eyes are bright and free of discharge.

Pigs with acute erysipelas die rather rapidly, usually within 36 hours. It is especially deadly in small pigs; older hogs show slightly more resistance. Those that do recover from the acute type very seldom make profitable feeders, and often show other symptoms. The joints may become swollen and enlarged, and the pigs often appear to have some form of arthritis. The skin may become inflamed in spots or blotches, and later may slough off. This is the form known as diamond-skin disease. In most cases of the chronic type some of the animals are carriers, and will infect each new pig crop or any hogs with which they come in contact.

Control: Since some animals are carriers, remove all hogs from the herd that show abnormalities. Another precaution is to keep all hogs away from soil where the disease has been within the past 2 or 3 years.

There is an anti-erysipelas serum that is quite effective in stopping death losses if it is given early enough in the acute stage. The difficulty with this treatment is that it is only a protection for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. It has little or no value in the chronic form of the disease.

The Federal Bureau of Animal Industry is cooperating with some of the State Departments of Agriculture and Experiment Stations in an effort to work out a program of preventive vaccination. This has been confined to five of the more western states, where the disease is more prominent than it is in Ohio. The work so far has been encouraging, although immunity is not as lasting as with hog cholera vaccination.

Swine Influenza

This is a very contagious disease of swine, generally occurring in the fall and winter. Usually, it does not produce a high mortality but often weakens the hogs so that they become victims of other diseases.

The symptoms are: hogs go off feed; they lie around, and become dull and listless; they usually have a cough; the breathing is jerky; and the hogs often are said to have thumps.

Control: There is no known specific control for the disease. There are some practices that have helped in specific cases and they may be tried if the operator so desires. An injection of mixed bacterins has seemed to help in some instances and given no results in others. Baking soda in the drinking water is inexpensive and may help. By far the best specific control is to keep the pigs dry and warm, and free from drafts. Pigs usually recover in a week or 10 days.

Frequent outbreaks of the disease are usually due to faulty housing or management. Houses that are tightly built and poorly ventilated are usually damp, and this is conducive to the disease. This is especially true if the pigs are forced to leave the house for feed and water. The rapid change in temperature and humidity between a warm, damp house and the outside will aggravate the possibility of trouble. Drafty quarters also induce hogs to pile up and this causes some hogs to become warm and steamy, so that when they get up from the pile they become chilled.

Good Sanitation Not Enough

While good sanitation is the biggest single factor in preventing pig troubles, it will not prevent disease if hogs are allowed to come in contact with other hogs that are infected. These additional rules should be followed:

1. Dispose of any hogs that show unthriftiness, or at least keep them separate from the healthy pigs. Be especially careful that some of the sow herd are not carriers.
2. When purchasing any hogs, either feeder pigs or breeding stock, keep those animals completely separate from the other hogs for a quarantine period of 2 to 3 weeks. Hogs that appear healthy may pick up infections in stockyard pens, or in trucks used to haul livestock.
3. Use all known and approved methods of disease control, such as immunizing pigs against hog cholera.
4. When specific trouble starts, call a veterinarian.